We all have a right to learn

Why not me!

A book published by adults involved in reading, writing and math programs across Nova Scotia

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Why not me! is a book that talks about how adults in literacy and upgrading programs have been part of helping government decide what to do.

Last year, a group called Literacy Nova Scotia wanted to find out what kinds of adult literacy and upgrading programs we need in this province. They wanted to know how the Community College system could work with programs that already exist and how it could put on new programs.

Literacy Nova Scotia hired Betty-Ann Lloyd to do the research. She spent six months reading, talking with people and writing what she thought should happen. Her report is called **Adult literacy, basic education and academic upgrading in Nova Scotia: The role of the community college.**

Betty-Ann wanted to find out what kinds of things are important to the adults who are taking part in programs. One of the ways she did this was to get 13 learners together for a meeting in Truro. She listened to what the learners had to say and she put the results in her report. She also invited everybody back for a second meeting in Halifax to talk about the report and to talk about what is happening next.

At the first meeting, everyone wrote a letter to the Minister of Advanced Education and Job Training, Joel Matheson. He answered this letter and came to the second meeting to talk about his response and to talk about this book that was being put together.

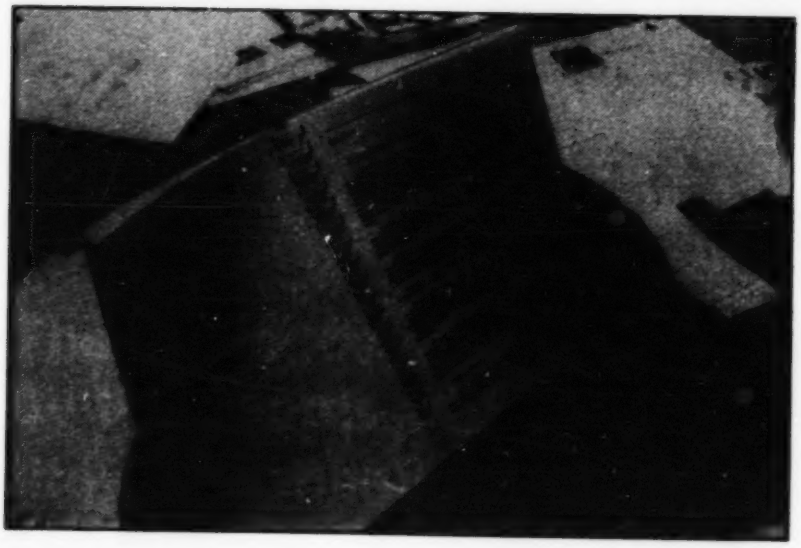
At the first meeting in Truro, all the participants made a list of things that they want the government, the programs and the public to know. This list is part of the big report and is also printed on the next page.

Everyone who could come to the second meeting in Halifax put together the rest of this book. On Friday night, John Sherlock came to take the photographs as we talked among ourselves and with the Minister. The next day we worked in groups to write the stories and headlines and make up the cover.

Not everyone who has come to the two meetings wants to have their names or photographs printed in public. But, even if someone doesn't have their photo or writing in the book, they have been a part of the way in which the ideas and the statements were made.

These are the statements made by the people who attended the Truro meeting.

- We are not illiterate.
- As students, we don't want pity, but respect.
- We need to change what people think about learners going back for upgrading.
- There should be more public awareness and advertising.
- There should be more programs and different types of programs everywhere, especially in the rural areas.
- We need more tutors and more time with tutors each session.
- The tutor's understanding as a person can make all the difference.
- All programs should have math and reading.
- We need more good up-to-date Canadian materials.
- We want to learn from things we use everyday— like banking and recipes.
- We need more local learners' organizations.
- Childcare, confidence, computers, cash registers, counsellors, car pools and programs close to home
- We want programs for our children.



The research report sponsored by Literacy Nova Scotia has a section on the meeting we had in Truro.

I hope we all get the help we are looking for

by Mary Carew

The weekend of March 17 and 18, 1989, meant a lot to me. When asked to put on paper **What did I get out of this meeting**, there was no problem. My two days of the Truro learners' meeting was a great experience to me.

The people were so excited about what was happening and so aware of what was going on around them. I experienced a great deal of thought and searching my mind to see that there was so much help around, and people seeking it, and yet away from us very little being done about it.

My program is a great help to me. I have so much support. This weekend I am sure gave a lot of support to every person who has attended. It helped me realize how fortunate I am.

It was very good of the Literacy Nova Scotia board to care about people and to want to get people together. I am grateful to Betty Ann, Agnes and Phil for letting me be a part of this group.

I will remember this weekend and again say "Thank You" for being able to meet these wonderful, caring people. I hope they all get the help they are looking for.

If there is any way I can help, please let me know. If it is within my means I will be more than happy to accommodate. A special thanks to Agnes Barnes who got me involved.

Getting together — The sky is the limit

by Agnes Barnes

Have you ever stepped back to look at what you have done with your life? Did you think that you would end up where you are now — Especially if you thought you would never become anything?

I have many times looked back. And what a long way I've come!

Growing up as a child, I never felt good about myself. I always seemed to be slow at learning everything.

I left school at a very young age after being put through all kinds of special classes and schools. I went out to work. I remember at the age of 15 thinking I would work until I was in my twenties to become rich!

I worked very hard at many different jobs. I had a child. And all these years my not knowing how to read or write very well never caught up with me. Until, one day, I faced a real test.

After working really well at a job I had for for six years, all the employees had to take a test. Rather than take the test and fail, I quit my job. I couldn't believe this was happening to me.

After a few years of feeling sorry for myself, I went back to school. With a lot of hard work, with good people supporting me, I have now begun to teach others.

I am working now at Dartmouth Literacy Network. I represent learners on the board of the Movement for Canadian Literacy and Literacy Nova Scotia. It felt really good to work on these two meetings in Truro and Halifax with Betty-Ann and Phil.

Soon, I am going to India to an International Task Force on Literacy. As a learner, I feel very proud to share my experience and to be a voice for other learners.

Agnes Barnes, Betty-Ann Lloyd and Phil Davison discuss plans for the meeting in Halifax.

Strength in numbers — Our voice is being heard

by Maria Innes

Everyone can help make it easier for themselves and those who follow to get the education they want.

We have to let our needs be known to the people who can help us. Then, make sure they do not forget us by keeping in touch and as up-to-date as possible on their progress.

The harder we push now, the better the system will be in the future! If we were not willing to fight for education how could we have others fight for us?

Things are being done. We have a long way to go.

Every time we do something like write a letter to a politician or newspaper, we are helping that progress in our own way!

Let's keep fighting, helping others find strength in us and having pride in ourselves!

Maria and Doris read over some notes from another meeting.

The learner's bookstore

by Doris Poirier

I was walking down Learner's highway a long time ago.
One day I saw a sign which I didn't know how to read.
A man said to me, "This is a Learner's Book Store."
As I got a little closer, the door came open wide.
I saw a host of Learners; they were standing everywhere close by.
One handed me a basket and said, "My Learner, shop with care."
Everything you needed was in the bookstore.
And all you could not carry, you could come back for more.
First I got a reader book, math was in the same row,
further down was the understanding tutors,
which you meet everywhere you go.
I got a box or two of wisdom, a bag or two of help.
I just couldn't miss the happiness of Learners everywhere you go.
I stopped to get some strength and courage to help me run this race.
But then my basket was getting full,
but I remembered I needed some Learning.
I did not forget Salvation, for salvation, that was free.
So I tried to get enough of that Learning to save both you and me.

Age is only a number — We're never too old to learn!

J. Slawter

I had a bad experience in high school with my grade ten teacher. She made me feel like I did not know anything in my life. No matter how hard I tried to do well, she always made me feel like nothing.

But 13 years later, I was not happy with my life the way it was. I wanted to do more for my three girls. They were bringing home more homework and I would get very upset because I couldn't help them.

But God is very good because I started to pray to Him about going back to school myself and I asked that He would show me a sign to let me know that I was doing the right thing.

So weeks went by and nothing happened. But when I thought it was a wrong decision, He stepped right in.

One day I went to Canada Manpower with my sister and I was looking around. There was a pamphlet about a literacy program. I picked it up and started to read it. I said that I was going back to school.

I went home and called the number that was on the paper. I said I would like to read and write better — So can you help me? And the lady said Yes, we can help you, Mrs. Slawter.

So on my birthday, October 4, I started back to school. That first step was hard, but my tutor is a Godsend. She is my friend. And my family help me a lot — they are fantastic! The people I got to meet are just like a family, so I thank God for them everyday.

Joel Matheson, the Minister of Advanced Education and Job Training, joked with us at the Halifax meeting.

The time to learn is now!

by Jimmie Stewart

I started asking questions about education several years ago. I wanted to improve my reading and writing. I got in touch with someone who told me they could help me. They got me a tutor who worked with me and helped me to learn. I felt fantastic!

I wanted to do more. I went to some meetings in Stellarton and we talked about learning. Then I was invited to attend a meeting in Truro and one in Halifax to talk with other adult learners about education.

We talked about how to help other people to get what they want. We talked about speaking out. It was a great meeting. I felt like I was part of a family.

These meetings showed me that there are a lot of people who want to learn. If they all came forward we wouldn't have enough tutors. We wouldn't have enough books.

I feel we need more opportunities to get an education. There's so much out there to explore. So much to learn. So much to know.

Let's all get involved. Let's all work together.

And we joked back with him!

There's more to life with education

by Gary

I have a lot of concerns and points I want to make.

1. Let's fight to make a better education system in our world.
2. Let's fight for the educator to be educated about our world.
3. Let's work with the government to help educate them on the needs of the learners.
4. Let's fight for the right for people to learn.
5. Let's fight our feeling that we have to hide from the rest of the world because of the level of our education.
6. Let's let the world know we are fighting to help ourselves to a better education.
7. Let's let the learners of the world know we, as adult learners, are here to help.
8. Let's let the youth know that we, as adult learners, are fighting for the right for a good education in the future.
9. Let's fight to stop this from happening to our children, to all children.

Let's make the pathway — EASIER

You can never learn enough

by Carrie Smith

I found all the learners that I have met at conferences across Canada want the very same things. We just want an education.

We all know that it is not going to take forever for us to get it. But we also know we are not going to get it overnight either.

If we are to make a better life for ourselves and our children we have to educate ourselves first. But also, we have got to find a way of making sure our children get a good education now so there won't be all of these problems when our children grow up.

There are always going to be people that learn at a slower rate than others. But we have all got to stick together so we will be able to support our families without the government's help.

Learners have to learn to help each other more. When someone learns to read and write, then they can go on to another person and teach them how to read and write.

That way, you are giving back what has been given to you so freely. But we have got to all stick together on this.

Yes, it is scary! But we can do it if we really put our minds to it. We can't change the world in a day or a year, but we can sure take it one step at a time. And no one can ask for more than that.

Because, if we don't start now, our children are going to have the very same problems we do when they grow up.

Phil Davison and Carrie Smith talk about the agenda for the meeting in Halifax.

A get together of friendly strangers

by B.M.

I am taking an upgrading course in reading and writing. I have been taking the course since May of last year.

Betty Ann and Agnes invited me to a learner-student meeting in Truro. I went from my home town to Halifax on the bus. I was to meet Betty Ann and Agnes at the bus station, but at the time I did not know that the other bus drivers were on strike.

When I got to the bus station, pickets were there. So the bus went right by the station, stopping at the Forum. Then the bus driver said: "If you want to go to Truro, you will have to go by train."

So I got a taxi and went to the Nova Scotia Hotel. I had the number that they gave me for their office in Darmouth. So I called and asked for Agnes and told her I was in the train station calling from a pay phone.

She said she would have a man by the name of Phil Davison come to to find me. Phil and I waited for Betty Ann.

Then we went to pick up two other women and drove to Truro, stopping at the Glengarry Hotel for the meeting of learners-students.

This was the first time ever I was in Truro, and the first time to a learner-student meeting. I enjoyed the weekend. I found everyone friendly. I learned about others, what they are doing, about different programs and most of all how quickly people learn and improve.

My family drove up on Saturday to take me home. The fog was very thick driving back and we missed our turn off and landed at Halifax Shopping Centre. We didn't stop to shop, but drove on home and we were happy to get there.

I want to thank Betty Ann and Agnes for the lovely time they showed me while I was in Truro. I found everything was good — the service, the food, and the company.

Learners working with learners become friends very quickly.

We all have a right to learn — Why not me?

by Joyce Stewart

I was born as a twin. My twin sister's name is Marjorie. We were born in Pictou. We were three days old when we went to Children's Aid.

Children's Aid sent me to a foster home in Saltsprings. My foster mother's name was Bessie Watters. She was a very nice person. We lived in a big white house. She could cook anything you liked. In summer, I picked raspberries and blackberries. Bessie would make them into jam. We went swimming in the summer and skating in the winter.

I went to school in Saltsprings. I had a mile and a half to walk to school everyday. One day on the way home, I took a convulsion and fell head first over a bridge into the water.

Some kids coming home from school saw me fall and took me home to Bessie. After that, I stayed home a lot. The teacher said I could stay home because I had convulsions. The teacher phoned the Children's Aid and they put me in the Nova Scotia Training School. I didn't want to go because I would miss Bessie. She was just like a mother to me. But I knew those things had to happen.

I didn't like the training school at first because I was lonely. Then I got used to the people. I could go home on holidays . We had good meals. I left there when I was seventeen to go to work.

I have a daughter and she has two little boys. Gary is one year old and Scott is three months old.

My husband Jimmy and I found out about places to get help about three years ago. A man gave Jimmy a number to call about getting more education. We called and we both got tutors. My tutors both didn't work out and that was really hard. Jimmy got on and is now in the community college.

I wrote the tests to get into upgrading, too. My mark wasn't high enough to get into Jimmy's class. I came to Halifax to the conference. We talked a lot. I hope something will happen so I can go on with my education.

It was at the meeting in Halifax that we met with Joel Matheson, Minister of Advanced Education and Job Training. We put together this book to tell others about our experience at the meetings and in our lives. Some of us do not want our pictures or our names in this book, but we all wish you the best of luck in the future. Carrie Smith, B.M., J. Slawter, Agnes Barnes, Joel Matheson, Maria Innes, Doris Poirier, Jimmie Stewart, Joyce Stewart and Gary.

A special hello to Carol, Randy and Lorraine who met with us in Truro, but were not able to come to Halifax.

This book was published by 13 people involved in adult literacy, basic education and academic upgrading in Nova Scotia. They were assisted by staff of the Literacy Division of the Department of Advanced Education and Job Training and by Agnes Barnes, learner representative on the Ministerial Advisory Board, Literacy Nova Scotia.

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